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1 April 1966

OCI No. 0798/66

Copy No. 94

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

STRUGGLE GROUPS IN I CORPS

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

Office of Current Intelligence

GROUP 1
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State Dept. review completed

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
1 April 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Struggle Groups in I Corps

1. The themes, timing, and effectiveness of the antigovernment movement in I Corps strongly suggest that it has the full support of and is strongly influenced by Buddhist leader Tri Quang and other ranking monks in the area. Reported conversations between Tri Quang and both Vietnamese Government officials and US Embassy officers indicate that Quang is in a position to escalate protests in I Corps or to call them off. However, public participation by Buddhist leaders has been fairly restricted thus far. Tri Quang was reported to have made an appearance in the Buddhist procession of some 20,000 persons in Hue last Sunday. A significant antigovernment communiqué broadcast from Hue later this week was issued in the name of the Buddhist chaplains of I Corps and was signed by Thich Don Hau, a close associate of Tri Quang and a highly respected monk in Hue.

2. Student leaders in both Hue and Da Nang have been the most overt in organizing demonstrations, writing communiqués, and giving speeches. In particular, a group of Hue University radicals (including Rector Bui Tuong Huan, Professor Le Tuyen, and student leader Buu Ton) have been identified as leaders and participants in public demonstrations. This group in general has long been linked to Tri Quang and has a history of opposition to military government. Some members may have Nationalist Party (VNQDD) ties, and rumors have consistently described them as being influenced by the Viet Cong, although this has never been proved. Last fall this group organized a brief student protest movement against the government's military draft laws. In the fall of 1964 some of these same individuals were active in fostering a militant left-wing group of "National Salvation Councils"

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which extended beyond I Corps and called for some form of "people's government." There was definite evidence of Viet Cong penetration of some of the National Salvation Councils, especially in II Corps.

3. The current agitation in I Corps is being conducted in the names of numerous ad hoc groups which have sprung up in the past few weeks. "The Voice of the Popular Force Struggling for the Revolution" has sponsored radiobroadcasts from Hue. Other specific demonstrations and/or communiqués issued in Hue have been sponsored by such groups as "The People's Revolutionary Struggle Committee of Hue," "Hue Student Forces," "Market Sales Girls' Struggle Force," "Bus Drivers' Struggle Force," and "Businessmen's Struggle Group." Agitation in Da Nang immediately after the dismissal of General Thi was carried out by the "Military and Civilian Struggle Group of I Corps." Presumably, supporters of General Thi predominated in this organization, as its activities were concerned with the reinstatement of General Thi. However, as Buddhist demands began to assume greater importance after 12 March, protest activities appeared to be managed more by the Da Nang Student Union and "The Da Nang Popular Force Struggling for the Revolution." Organizations representing cyclo-drivers and other groups similar to those in Hue also appeared in Da Nang. These struggle groups are almost certainly not so much spontaneous as deliberately intended to foster the impression of wide support from all strata of the populace.

4. There are also reports of positive support for the antigovernment movement by some local officials, including the mayor of Da Nang, the Quang Ngai Province chief, and the regional police director. In addition, uniformed military troops and other government employees, such as court clerks and police in Hue, have participated in protest marches. It is not clear whether government elements in the protests are more responsive to Buddhist/student leadership, or whether they are more loyal to General Thi.

5. Although the general intentions of the Viet Cong to exploit any governmental political crisis have been widely reported, there are only scattered allegations that some organizers of protests have Viet Cong

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ties, and little specific information concerning
their activities.

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6. Some degree of coordination between groups in Hue and other cities as well is clearly in effect. Whether one man, Tri Quang or someone else, is calling all the shots is unclear. However, the Buddhist organization is almost certainly supplying the backbone of the coordination process.

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